

# USDANEWS

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## USDA's 2002 Budget Calls For Cut Of \$8.9 Billion, Cut Of 79 Fed Staff Years

by Ron Hall, Office of Communications

**"T**he fiscal year 2002 budget for USDA is a budget of responsible restraint, but not huge reductions."

Secretary **Ann Veneman** made that point as she spoke at a press conference, held on April 9, to present USDA's proposed budget for FY 2002. She and Office of Budget and Program Analysis Director **Steve Dewhurst** highlighted items of importance in the Department's proposed budget.

Veneman said that to achieve restraint, USDA's proposed budget does not include approximately \$1.1 billion in one-time mostly emergency funding that should end in this fiscal year. She said that future funding for such needs at USDA can be provided from the \$5.6 billion disaster reserve proposed in President **George W. Bush's** overall federal budget for FY 2002.

In addition, Veneman said that USDA's budget proposes about \$150 million in savings by eliminating approximately 300 'earmarked projects' for research and extension activities that were not subject to a competitive, merit-based selection process.

Also, to achieve restraint, she said that the Department's budget proposal saves taxpayers an additional \$200 million by reducing or eliminating programs that are not immediate priorities, that need to be better targeted, or that have completed their mission. As an example, pilot programs such as the modular housing demonstration loan program in the Rural Housing Service are not being renewed.

Noting that "It is important that we always try to deliver to the taxpayer the best return for their investment," Veneman advised that the Department would be conducting a number of reviews to determine opportunities to improve management at USDA. Such reviews would include focusing on the need to develop modern management

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"You could be located on a Forest Service ranger district anywhere from Maine to California, serving on an engine crew, a firefighting crew, a smokejumper crew, a helicopter crew, a hand crew—wherever our firefighting needs are at the time, and based on your capabilities," notes **Jacob Gipson** (right), a fire engine operator on the Forest Service's "Dew Drop" engine crew, based in Pioneer, Calif., on the Eldorado National Forest, and a former FS 'Hotshot' firefighter near Lake Elsinore, Calif. He is talking with would-be job applicants at an FS job fair in Washington, DC, where he was helping to recruit 3,500 new FS employees, nationwide, for the 2001 fire season. Note **Tina Terrell's** story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY KARL PERRY**

## Big Changes Are Afoot During This TSP 'Open Season'

*Then In 2006, The Limits Are Lifted*

by Ron Hall, Office of Communications

**T**here are TSP 'open seasons'—and then there's *this* TSP 'open season.'

As part of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) 'open season,' or 'open enrollment' period that began on May 15 and lasts until July 31, three new changes have been initiated in that federal investment program. They were highlighted in the Statement of Earnings and Leave which USDA employees received for Pay Period No. 6.

According to **Eleanor Ratcliff**, USDA's benefits officer in the Office of Human Resources Management, the first change concerns a one percent increase in the maximum amount of contributions which employees enrolled in either the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) can

contribute to their federal retirement programs, respectively, through TSP.

"Employees covered under CSRS can now elect to contribute, to the Thrift Savings Plan, up to 6 percent of the base pay they earn each pay period, while employees covered under FERS can now elect to contribute to TSP up to 11 percent of their base pay," she explained. Contribution limits will then increase by one percentage point each year, for each retirement plan, through the year 2005. By that time, the maximum contribution level for CSRS enrollees will be 10 percent of base pay to TSP, and for FERS enrollees will be 15 percent of base pay to TSP.

"Then, in 2006, those employee contribution limits are lifted entirely, for both retirement plans," Ratcliff noted.

"At that point, the only restriction in effect will be the Internal Revenue Service's annual limit, or cap, on employee contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan," she said. "It's called the 'IRS elective deferral limit,' and it's currently set at \$10,500 per year for either retirement plan."

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# Secretary Ann Veneman



Last month, President George W. Bush and several members of the Cabinet traveled to Quebec City for the third Summit of the Americas. At the Summit, leaders from 34 democracies in

the Western Hemisphere discussed efforts to conclude negotiations on a Free Trade Area of the Americas by January 2005, with a view toward beginning implementation by the end of that year.

President Bush has made open markets in this hemisphere a top priority. And U.S. agriculture has much to gain from this effort. Everyone eats, and everyone has a stake in a trading system that allows U.S. agriculture to compete fairly for growth opportunities in the expanding world marketplace.

Currently, about 20 percent of U.S. farm production is sold in foreign markets every year. That percentage rises to about one-third for our major field crops. In fact, over the past four years, the United States has exported nearly 16 times more wheat than we've imported, 19 times more feed grains, and 145 times more soybeans.

So clearly our farmers and ranchers benefit from open markets. But they're not the

only people who benefit. Agriculture is one of America's greatest economic engines. The business of agriculture—from producer to processor to retailer—generates about 16 percent of U.S. gross national product, and provides or supports roughly 17 percent of all American jobs. Clearly, agriculture is a pillar of the American economy and helps support our standard of living.

That simply would not be the case without strong export activity. Last year, U.S. agricultural exports were valued at more than \$51 billion, a figure no other nation can match. Dollar for dollar, we export more meat than steel, more corn than cosmetics, more wheat than coal, more bakery products than motorboats, and more fruits and vegetables than household appliances. Agriculture generally ranks among the top six U.S. industry groups in exports sales, accounting for about 7 percent of the nation's total exports by value.

Altogether, these exports generate billions of dollars in business activity throughout the U.S. economy and provide a paycheck for nearly a million U.S. workers in all 50 states—people employed in production, processing, transportation, and marketing. And last year, the United States enjoyed a \$12.6 billion surplus in agricultural trade—one of the few sectors of our economy which, year in and year out, shows a net

trade surplus.

The picture is then already very good, but we can make it better. The key is to further open foreign markets. After all, 96 percent of the world's population—and therefore, consumers—live outside the United States. Over the next decade, food consumption in the fast-growing, emerging markets of Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East will surge as a growing middle class, with rapidly rising disposable incomes, becomes more able to purchase more and better food. This expanding demand can sustain a strong and prosperous U.S. agriculture.

Trade agreements, whether in this hemisphere or another, have led to real, measurable gains in U.S. exports and farm income.

Opening markets and breaking down trade barriers is key to increasing U.S. agricultural sales and improving U.S. economic growth. That is why President Bush has vowed to pursue an aggressive trade agenda that includes the creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas, and also extends far beyond our hemisphere, through the negotiation of other regional and bilateral agreements to open markets around the world. Success in these efforts is critical not only for America's farmers, ranchers, food processors, and retailers, but ultimately for all Americans. ♦

*TSP 'Open Season'...continued from pg. 1*

The second change being offered to employees during this TSP 'open season' is the addition of two new investment funds.

Ratcliff pointed out that, heretofore, employees had only three TSP investment funds to choose from: the Government Securities Investment Fund, or "G Fund," which invests in short-term, risk-free U.S. Treasury securities that are specially issued to the TSP; the Fixed Income Index Investment Fund, or "F Fund," which invests in a bond index fund that tracks the Lehman Brothers U.S. Aggregate (LBA) bond index; and the Common Stock Index Investment Fund, or "C Fund," which invests in a stock index fund that tracks the Standard & Poor's (S&P) 500 stock index.

"But now," she affirmed, "employees have the option of investing in two new funds that are stock-based: the 'S' and 'I' Funds."

The Small Capitalization Stock Index Fund, or "S Fund," covers medium and small

company stocks that are excluded from the C Fund. Specifically, it tracks the Wilshire 4500 stock index of publicly traded U.S. companies that are *not* in the S&P 500 index that the C Fund tracks.

The International Stock Index Investment Fund, or "I Fund," is TSP's international stock index fund. Specifically, it tracks the Morgan Stanley Capital International EAFE (Europe, Australasia, and the Far East) stock index, an index that tracks the overall performance of major companies and industries in the European, Australian, and Asian stock markets. It then invests in shares of the Barclays EAFE Index Fund.

"The stock indexes, that these two new funds are tracking, have posted impressive gains in many recent years—but they've also traditionally been much more volatile," she observed. "So whatever can go up can go down—pretty fast."

The third change during this TSP open season is that new CSRS and FERS employ-

ees may participate immediately in TSP.

"With this change, employees who are new to the federal government—almost always employees who are covered by FERS—and those who leave federal service but who later return—which may include CSRS employees—may now begin participating in the Thrift Savings Plan immediately," Ratcliff said. "In the past they would have been subject to waiting periods that could last nearly a year."

However, she noted that this change does not alter the waiting periods that the federal government uses to begin its automatic and matching contributions for FERS investors in TSP. "There is generally a wait of six to 12 months before those automatic and matching contributions take effect," she said.

"I see this as a great opportunity for employees to invest more in TSP," Ratcliff underscored. "In fact, I submitted my change right off the bat." ♦

## USDA To Honor Its Own June 4

The Department's annual Honor Awards Ceremony for 2001 is scheduled to be held on Monday, June 4 at 12:30 p.m. at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington, DC.

**Sandra Anglade**, USDA's employee recognition program manager with the Office of Human Resources Management and coordinator of the Ceremony, noted that this is the 55th Honor Awards Ceremony held by the Department. "USDA will honor individuals and groups of employees for their outstanding achievements, based on recommendations to Secretary **Ann Veneman** from USDA's Honor Awards Committee," she noted.

## Administrative



The Honor Awards Committee, chaired by **Sherie Hinton Henry**, acting deputy administrator for operations and management in the Rural Development mission area, was composed of Henry and four individuals selected from agriculture, academia, and the private, non-profit sector. Committee members met

at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC on April 11 to evaluate the nominations received for the Department's highest awards. 149 nominations were submitted to the Committee, including 45 individual nominations and 104 group nominations.

**Cecilia Matthews**, USDA's incentive awards officer in OHRM, noted that Committee members then forwarded their selections—which consisted of 31 individual and 62 group nominations, for a total of 93 nominations—to Veneman for her consideration as USDA Honor Award recipients.

Matthews added that the Ceremony is to be transmitted live via satellite to employee locations around the country. All USDA employees are invited to attend. ♦

*USDA's 2002 Budget...continued from pg. 1*

information systems to provide timely and reliable information on USDA finances, personnel and purchases; and making the Department's administrative operations more efficient by eliminating redundant and aging information systems. USDA is also reviewing field office structures to see how it can continue to improve service and effectiveness, and making sure USDA foreign food assistance programs are achieving the anticipated results.

USDA's overall budget proposal for FY 2002 calls for a program level of nearly \$94.9 billion and federal cash outlays of \$63.2 billion. This represents an 8.6 percent decrease—by about \$8.9 billion—from the currently estimated FY 2001 program level of almost \$103.8 billion, as well as a 9.1 percent decrease—by about \$6.3 billion—from the currently estimated FY 2001 cash outlay level of nearly \$69.6 billion. As noted earlier, both the program level and cash outlay figures for FY 2001 include emergency assistance and one-time spending items for that year only.

Budget officials generally regard "program level" figures as the best method for describing the total scope of federal activities, including all services, loans, and grants in a budget. This is because "federal cash outlay" figures—while generally publicized more frequently—often don't clearly reflect the total magnitude of federal activities, since some loan program outlay figures are either excluded or presented in net present value terms.

USDA's budget proposes a federal staffing level for FY 2002 of 97,794 full-time equivalent positions, or federal staff years. This represents a decrease of 79 federal staff years from the currently estimated FY 2001 federal staff year level of 97,873.

Agencies which reflect proposed increases in federal staff years for FY 2002 include the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (an increase of 100 federal staff years, to total 7,000 federal staff years), the National Agricultural Statistics Service (53, to total 1,188), the Agricultural Marketing Service (33, to total 3,425), the Food and Nutrition Service (28, to total 1,614), the Foreign Agricultural Service (19, to total 985), the Food Safety and Inspection Service (16, to total 9,661), and the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (9, to total 810).

Agencies with proposed decreases in federal staff years include the Natural Resources Conservation Service (a decrease of 301 federal staff years, to total 11,200 federal staff years) and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (36, to total 415).

In addition, the permanent full-time non-federal county employees of the Farm Service Agency are projected to remain at 9,496, while the temporary non-federal FSA county staff years are projected to decrease by 461, to total 2,000—for a sum total of 11,496 non-federal staff years for FY 2002.

These federal staff year estimates are all subject to adjustments to reflect the final outcome of budget negotiations, including such unpredictable factors as natural disasters and other emergencies.

*Highlights of USDA's FY 2002 budget proposal, thought to be of particular interest to employees, include:*

- Providing an increase of \$13 million, to total \$277 million, in the APHIS-administered Agricultural Quarantine Inspection Program (AQI), which is USDA's front-line defense to help protect the U.S. against plant pests and animal diseases like foot-and-mouth disease and BSE, or "mad cow disease." In addition, to

continue strengthening these programs, Veneman announced the authorization of an additional \$32 million to hire approximately 350 additional personnel at critical ports and international airports to protect against pests and diseases. This includes 127 permanent officers and technicians, 27 canine officers, 173 temporary inspector positions, and 20 veterinarians. These positions are over and above the levels indicated in the FY 2001 and FY 2002 budgets and will be financed from available revenues in the APHIS user fee account.

- Continuing the Department's field office modernization plan for its county-based agencies (FSA, NRCS, and RD), with a continued emphasis on a "Common Computing Environment" (CCE) for all USDA Service Center agencies. This is designed to allow efficient e-mail, records transfer, and streamlined business processes for better customer service. This would also provide the infrastructure needed to meet the requirement, in the Freedom to E-File Act of 2000, that customers be able to do business electronically with USDA Service Center agencies by June 2002.

- Funding the Cyber Security Program Office in the Office of the Chief Information Officer at \$4.5 million, the same level as 2001, to support efforts at safeguarding the current and future delivery of USDA programs and services over the Internet.

- Budgeting an additional \$10 million, to total \$25 million, for NASS's statistical activities associated with preparations for the 2002 Census of Agriculture, which is to be mailed out in December 2002.

USDA's proposed budget for FY 2002 was transmitted to Congress earlier on the same day as the Department's press conference. ♦





## Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

### More Anti-Hunger Efforts

217,348 pounds of food can fill a lot of grocery carts. But more importantly, it can fill a lot of previously empty plates—and that's why USDA employees recently "went all out" to collect that amount of food.

It was all part of the Department's fourth annual food drive, titled "Building Partnerships to End Hunger." **Sylvia Montgomery**, a program analyst in the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and that agency's food drive coordinator, noted that the food drive was held from December 11, 2000 to January 5, 2001, with USDA employees at headquarters and field offices around the country participating. "We netted 217,348 pounds of food, as well as over \$3,700 in contributions," she affirmed.

**Pat Washington**, a technology management specialist in the Natural Resources Conservation Service and food drive coordinator for her agency and for the State Food and Agriculture Councils, added that the food and monetary donations were given to food banks, community shelters, feeding centers, and other charitable institutions both in the Washington, DC metropolitan area and at sites near USDA field offices.

The leadership of this food drive was a joint partnership between the Food and Nutrition Service and CSREES.

**Becky Rios**, outreach coordinator for the Farm Service Agency in Idaho, based in Boise, and coordinator for that agency's food drive and gleaning activities statewide, noted that, over the past several years, employee-sponsored food donations—including food drives and food recovery and gleaning activities—have garnered literally millions of pounds of non-perishable food items.

Previous employee activities to encourage food donations have included such novel and creative initiatives as contests in which the team of USDA employees which did *not* collect the most in food contributions would have to wash dishes for a noon meal for 130 people in Athens, Ga., an "ugly tie" contest in Alexandria, Va., and a "food fight for charity"—which wasn't so much in the "throw the food" spirit of the movie "Animal House" but rather involved which USDA team could bring in the most cases of food and sacks of potatoes for a food bank in Rapid City, S.D.

The January 1999 *USDA News* carried a story about some of those initiatives.

## Employees make these things...

# HAPPEN!

"Our recently completed food drive tried to build upon some of those successful strategies from the past," said **Pat Duncan**, a computer programmer in the National Agricultural Statistics Service and that agency's food drive coordinator, "with our own versions of contests, bake sales, and pizza party prizes for the most food collected."

"This Food Drive," emphasized **Alma Hobbs**, CSREES's deputy administrator for families, 4-H, and nutrition and co-chair of USDA's most recent effort, "reflects the professional and personal commitment of USDA employees to ending hunger."

—**CANDY MOUNTJOY**



"Here is just part of the 217,348 pounds of food that USDA employees around the country collected as part of our fourth annual food drive," notes **Alma Hobbs**, co-chair of that effort.—**PHOTO BY KEN HAMMOND**



## Natural Resources and Environment

### Join Our Firefighting Brigade!

How do you hire 3,500 new employees for the 2001 fire season in a short period of time? Ask the Forest Service. To achieve that goal, FS staffers used a variety of creative methods at recruitment—and other USDA agencies might find those methods helpful in their own recruiting efforts.

**Jennifer Plyler**, a Forest Service public affairs specialist who is the communications account manager for the agency's National Fire Plan, noted that this hiring effort is part of

that Plan. "The National Fire Plan is a \$1.9 billion undertaking developed by USDA and the U.S. Department of the Interior," she said, "to restore landscapes and help communities affected by last season's severe fires, ensure sufficient wildland firefighting resources in the future, and reduce future impacts of wildland fires in such situations as when homes have been built close to forests or grasslands."

Plyler advised that more than 92,000 fires broke out across the nation last summer, consuming nearly seven million acres of public lands. "At the height of last year's fire season," she said, "nearly 30,000 people—including federal personnel and others from 48 states, four countries, and five military battalions—battled the fires."

"With an increased firefighting force," she added, "we expect that natural resources will be better protected, fewer small fires will become large, we'll reduce the threat of fires in forests near communities, and we'll be able to lower the cost of suppressing large fires."

Plyler said that over 1,500 of the 3,500 new hires are to be permanent positions. The other jobs are to be temporary or seasonal, lasting up to six months per year, with opportunities to become permanent seasonal employees. Most of the 3,500 positions are to be forestry aids and technician jobs assigned to firefighting positions.

"Our goal is to have all 3,500 positions filled by June," she emphasized.

Last October, when the agency determined how many firefighter positions were needed, the first question was "How can we create a more diverse work force, attract quality applicants, and train this new firefighting cadre for the tasks at hand?"



"I've got plenty of good things to tell 'em—so let's get started," affirms **Mary Farnsworth** (right), a fire specialist at FS's headquarters office in Washington, DC, and a former FS 'Hotshot' firefighter in Redmond, Ore. She and **Dragobert Sharp**, a fire management officer based in Meadville, Miss., on the Homochitto National Forest, are comparing notes before participating in recruiting activities at a job fair in Washington, DC.—**PHOTO BY BRUCE McNEIL**

"One of our first steps was to develop a hiring strategy," Plyler explained. "So we formed 'strike teams'."

Those 'strike teams' consisted of FS employees whose main goal was to educate would-be applicants about the types of firefighting jobs available. Strike team members identified 18 initial cities where FS would host a job fair—"which is a great venue to reach people living in both urban and rural communities," she noted.

According to **Florence Pruitt**, the supervisor of administrative functions for the agency's Pacific Southwest Region, headquartered in Vallejo, Calif., and the person responsible for organizing, managing, and tracking the strike teams, the teams showed up at shopping malls—with firefighting equipment as visual aids—canvassed college campuses, and contacted local congressional district offices. FS employees in Vallejo arranged for **Joe Reyes**, an FS battalion chief with the Mariposa/Minarets Ranger District in North Fork, Calif., on the Sierra National Forest, to appear on the "Good Morning Sacramento" TV show to pitch this recruitment effort. "What followed was a deluge of applicants in what ended up being our most widely attended job fair nationwide," Pruitt affirmed.

**Janet Brandt-Jackson**, a recruitment specialist in human resources with FS's Vallejo regional office and principle organizer for that office's job fairs, said that "We coined the phrase 'bringing the woods to the 'hood'—and through that approach, the Forest Service was able to spread the word about employment opportunities, reinforce its commitment to targeted community outreach, and market natural resources all at the same time."

**Wilhelmina Bratton**, FS's national partnership coordinator in State and Private Forestry, and **Billy Terry**, chief of the Fire Training

Branch in State and Private Forestry, both at FS's headquarters office in Washington, DC, launched "Operation Hit the Streets." "We visited the offices of DC political leaders to spread the word about our fire hiring effort," Bratton noted. "It resulted in diverse applicants," added Terry, "including DC police officers and firefighters."

For potential applicants who were unable to attend the job fairs, staffers from FS and the Office of Personnel Management established separate web sites, both of which provided information about jobs and applications.

Plyler noted that FS held 30 job fairs in 11 states and Washington, DC during January and February. "Over 5,400 people attended, and we received around 30,000 applications for our 3,500 positions," she said.

"That's my definition of a successful recruiting effort!"

—**TINA TERRELL**



## Research, Education, and Economics

### From Old Tires, More "Crumb"

265 million tires are discarded in this country every year. But specialists with the Agricultural Research Service have created a new way to recycle them—and they're using technology adopted from the cotton gin.

**Stanley Anthony**, supervisory agricultural engineer and research leader at ARS's Cotton Ginning Research Unit in Stoneville, Miss., noted that recycled rubber can be used to make new tires, as well as running tracks, athletic shoes, soaker hoses, ball-point pens, tug-boat bumpers, livestock stall mats, speed bumps, and other goods.

"Currently," he advised, "companies typically cut tires into small pieces. Then they pulverize the rubber and polyester/nylon fiber components—either by grinding them or by using a cryogenic, or freezing, treatment, which is followed by an 'explosion' of that substance."

Anthony noted that this process recovers over half the rubber—but the rest, which is a non-biodegradable rubber-fiber mixture, goes to landfills. That recovered rubber, called "crumb," is worth about \$500 per ton.

"So what we did," he said, "was to use technology related to cotton ginning to develop a process that can recover, as separate materials, the rubber-fiber mixture that had been going to the landfills."

Anthony and others developed a machine—"as big as a truck," he observed—that operates similarly to machinery in the cotton industry which removes leaves and other plant parts off of the raw, unprocessed cotton before the "ginning process" separates cotton fibers from cotton seeds.

"Using that same approach," he explained, "our big machine in effect 'bites' into the rubber-fiber mixture, using steel-toothed cylinders that rotate and push the mixture against metal gratings." That forces the rubber off the fiber. "Then, that recovered rubber contains only about one percent fiber, so it's still marketable." He noted that no market exists yet for the fiber, or "fluff," that remains, but that estimates are that it might be worth \$300 per ton in the future.

ARS's machine, which is located in its lab in Stoneville, is the only one in existence.

Anthony said that in March 1999 ARS filed a patent application for its "new and improved" machine with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Ultimately, that patent was granted in March 2001.

"With this new technology," he affirmed, "less than five percent of the original tire would go to the landfill—which saves tire recycling companies resources, and/or which may generate additional income from recycling those same resources."

"For struggling companies which recycle tires for a living, this could make the difference between staying in business or going out of business."

—**TARA WEAVER-MISSICK**



"This field of work will certainly offer comparable challenges, just like your current job," affirms **Anita Adkins** (left), an FS human resources specialist on the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest, headquartered in Roanoke, Va., as she watches a Washington, DC police officer review a firefighter-related application at a recent job fair in Washington, DC. —**PHOTO BY BRUCE MCNEIL**



"The purpose of our technology," explains ARS's **Stanley Anthony**, "is to take ground-up rubber tires and process them further to extract even more reusable rubber, called 'crumb,' which is the black substance in this tray in my hand. Meanwhile, the material left over is fiber, or 'fluff,' which is coming down this chute."





**D**ale Bosworth was selected as the 15th chief of the Forest Service. He succeeded **Mike Dombeck**, who served in that position from January 1997 until he retired in

March 2001, following 23 years of federal service.

From October 1997 until he was selected for this position, effective in April 2001, Bosworth served as the regional forester of the Forest Service's Northern Region, headquartered in Missoula, Mont. He was the regional forester of FS's Intermountain Region, headquartered in Ogden, Utah, from 1994-97. From 1992-94 he was deputy regional forester of the agency's Pacific Southwest Region, [then] headquartered in San Francisco. From 1990-92 he was deputy director of the Timber Management Staff at FS headquarters in Washington, DC. He served as forest supervisor of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest, based in Salt Lake City, from 1986-90, after having been assistant director for land management planning at FS's Northern Region in Missoula from 1983-86.

Bosworth worked as the planning staff officer and later as deputy forest supervisor of the Flathead National Forest, based in Kalispell, Mont., from 1979-83. From 1976-79 he was a district ranger on the Clearwater National Forest in northern Idaho, following assignments on the [then] Kaniksu National Forest in Idaho, Colville National Forest in Washington, and subsequently the Lolo National Forest in Montana from 1969-76. He began his Forest Service career in 1966 as a forester on the [then] St. Joe National Forest in Avery, Idaho.

A native of northern California, Bosworth holds a B.S. degree in forestry from the University of Idaho. ♦



**C**liff Oliver was selected as the director of USDA's Office of Crisis Planning and Management. This is a newly created position as part of a

December 2000 reorganization that brought together, into that new staff office within Departmental Administration, the existing functions of personnel security, national security, and emergency management at USDA.

Before joining USDA, from August 1998 until he was selected for this position, effective in March 2001, Oliver served as chief of

## Editor's Roundup

### USDA people in the news

the Assessment Branch with the Federal Emergency Management Agency at its headquarters office in Washington, DC. In that position he managed FEMA's post-disaster forensic engineering program, known as the Building Performance Assessment Team Program, which produced reports focusing on lessons learned about the survivability of buildings following major disasters. Those reports included such disasters as Hurricanes Andrew (which occurred in 1992), Iniki (1993), Opal (1995), Fran (1996), and Georges (1998), Tropical Storm Alberto (1994), the May 1999 Midwest Tornado outbreak, and the April 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

Oliver worked as a senior engineer at FEMA from 1991-98, focusing on loss reduction issues involved in the federal government's National Flood Insurance Program. From 1987-91 he was a senior engineer with the county government of Prince George's County, Md., where he was responsible for overseeing various aspects of the County's flood control and flood emergency management programs.

Oliver worked as a field engineer for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority ("Metro") from 1986-87, where he helped oversee the construction of the Washington, DC metropolitan area's subway system. From 1984-86 he worked in various civil engineering positions in the private sector in the Washington metropolitan area.

A native of Bedford, N.Y., Oliver holds a B.S. degree in geology and an M.S. degree in engineering management, both from the University of Maryland. ♦



**N**orma McDill was selected as the deputy administrator for cotton in the Agricultural Marketing Service. She succeeded **Mary Atienza**, who served

in that position from 1994 until she retired in December 1999, following 30 years of service in AMS.

From December 1999 until her recent selection, McDill served as the acting deputy administrator for cotton in AMS. In addition, since November 1995 she served as the agency's associate deputy administrator for cotton. She was the deputy director for financial management in AMS from 1992-95.

From 1990-91 McDill served as the chief of AMS's Budget and Program Analysis Branch. She was a budget analyst in that branch from 1984-90. She worked in a variety of administrative positions, including administrative officer and accounting technician, in the [then] Office of Information from 1966-84, after having begun her USDA career in the [then] Soil Conservation Service as a secretary in 1963.

A native of Asheville, N.C., where she grew up on a tobacco farm, McDill holds a B.S. degree in business administration from the University of Maryland. ♦



**B**ob Epstein was selected as the deputy administrator for science and technology in the Agricultural Marketing Service. He succeeded **Bill Franks**, who served

in that position from March 1994 until he retired in June 2000, following over 38 years of federal service.

From June 2000 until he was selected for this position, effective in April 2001, Epstein served as the acting deputy administrator for science and technology in AMS. He was the agency's associate deputy administrator for science and technology from 1991-2000. In that position, he developed USDA's Pesticide Data Program, which is designed to collect statistically reliable pesticide residue data for dietary risk assessments, and which is now an international model for residue testing programs.

Epstein was chief of the [then] Quality Systems Branch in the Food Safety and Inspection Service from 1985-1990, after having been chief of FSIS's [then] Chemistry Laboratories Branch from 1979-85. In those two positions he helped develop FSIS's residue monitoring program, which monitors the amount of chemical residue on meat and poultry products. From 1971-79 he served as the technical director of the New Jersey State Police Laboratories, covering northern New Jersey. He worked as a research chemist in private industry in Brooklyn, N.Y., from 1964-71.

A native of Brooklyn, Epstein holds a B.S. degree in chemistry from the City College of

New York and an M.S. and a Ph.D. degree, both in analytical chemistry and both from the Polytechnic University, formerly Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. ♦



**R**ick Van Klaveren was selected as the regional conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Northern Plains Region, based in Lincoln, Neb. He suc-

ceeded **Judy Johnson**, who served in that position from September 1998 until January 2001, when she retired following 20 years of service with NRCS.

From March 1996 until he was recently selected for this position, Van Klaveren was director of NRCS's Conservation Engineering Division at the agency's headquarters office in Washington, DC. He worked as the regional conservation engineer in Sacramento, Calif., with NRCS's West Region from 1995-96. From 1990-95 he served as head of the Engineering Staff at the agency's [then] National Technical Center in Portland, Ore. He was the national irrigation engineer at NRCS headquarters from 1989-90, after having been the NRCS state conservation engineer for Montana, based in Bozeman, from 1987-89.

From 1984-87 Van Klaveren served as the NRCS/Agricultural Research Service liaison, based in Pullman, Wash., where he directed research on projects concerning frozen soil and how freezing and thawing affected erosion on farmland in the Northwest. He was the agency's state irrigation engineer in Sheridan, Wyo., from 1981-84, after having been its area engineer in Sheridan from 1977-81. He began his career with the agency as a field office engineer in Torrington, Wyo., in 1975, and then became a field office engineer in Sundance, Wyo., in 1976.

A native of Cheyenne, Wyo., Van Klaveren holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in agricultural engineering from the University of Wyoming and a Ph.D. degree in engineering sciences from Washington State University. ♦



**W**ho Wants To Be A Millionaire? OK, then how about \$500?

**Les Konrad** and **Doug Marousek** heard that call, and then rallied with the appropriate "right stuff" to win a recent road rally in Portland, Ore., and cop the \$500 prize for first place.



Konrad and Marousek, both statisticians at the Oregon State Statistical Office in Portland with

the National Agricultural Statistics Service, entered the road rally that was sponsored by a local car club.

Konrad explained that in this particular road rally, contestants drive their vehicles along a pre-determined course of about 25 miles, which winds through both urban and rural settings. "But the purpose of the rally," he pointed out, "is *not* to see who can complete the course in the fastest time—which could lead to reckless and speedy driving."

"Instead, the purpose is to see how close we contestants can come to the official time which had been recorded earlier for the two-hour event."

Marousek noted that his role was to navigate while Konrad was at the wheel of his 1979 blue El Camino.

Marousek explained that the strategy was to follow the instructions handed out, which plotted the course, plus locate particular local landmarks and other sites that were referenced in the instructions as clues, not exceed the speed limit, avoid shortcuts, and locate and then check in at six checkpoints along the way.

In addition, contestants could earn extra points by correctly answering trivia questions on such subjects as early automotive history and popular car-related songs of the '50s and '60s. "For instance," Konrad added, "I knew the lyrics to 'Little Deuce Coupe' by the **Beach Boys** and 'Little Old Lady from Pasadena' by **Jan and Dean**, and Doug knew a lot about the early history of Ford and General Motors."

Marousek said that they ended up completing the course in about two minutes longer than the official time.

**Bruce Eklund**, deputy state statistician for NASS in Portland, offered his own explanation for the success of the two in this road rally. "Our statisticians amass detail and then articulate it well to present the evidence needed to make the best possible estimates on such subjects as crop forecasts," he observed. "And now," he quipped, "I'll shift into mega-spin-doctor-mode by offering that the analysis, and eye for detail, that our statisticians do in their jobs for NASS is related to the analysis and eye for detail that Les and Doug applied to their approach to winning the road rally, including acing out the trivia questions."

Konrad phrased his analysis a little more directly. "What did we attribute our success to, at the road rally?" he asked rhetorically. "Hey, it was just like being at work—it was another due-date to meet!"

"Plus," Marousek laughed, "there definitely was a lot of luck involved."

The spirit of **James Dean** would no doubt be proud. ♦

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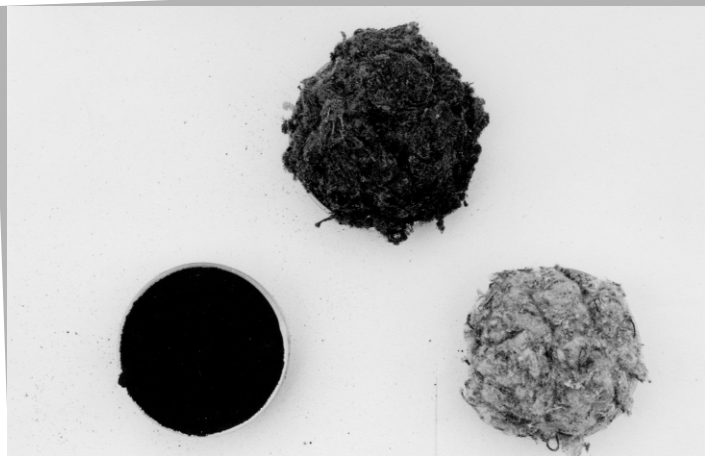
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## Letters

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This "Letters" section is an opportunity for USDA employees to communicate with Secretary **Ann Veneman**, through questions or comments, on matters that would be appropriate and of general interest to USDA employees across the country. She invites employees to use this particular forum in the **USDA News** to communicate with her, by using the following mailing address: "Letters," Sec. Ann Veneman, USDA, STOP #0190, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250.



To the uninitiated, these three objects may look like two oversized dust balls and a saucer of soot. But to ARS specialists in Stoneville, Miss., the items represent how they have developed and applied new technology—similar in principle to that used in a cotton gin—to alleviate an environmental problem. Specifically, they take remains of old tires that have already been pulverized into a non-biodegradable fiber-rubber mixture (top image)—and that would normally be headed to a landfill—and instead process that mixture further. The result is to extract even more rubber called “crumb” (left image) that is reusable. What remains is a minimum of remaining residue called “fluff” (right image). Note **Tara Weaver-Missick's** story on page 5.—**PHOTO BY STANLEY ANTHONY**



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D.O.B. 05-08-1995 Sex: Male

Hair: Brown Eyes: Black

Height: 3 ft. 0 in. Weight: 38 lbs.

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